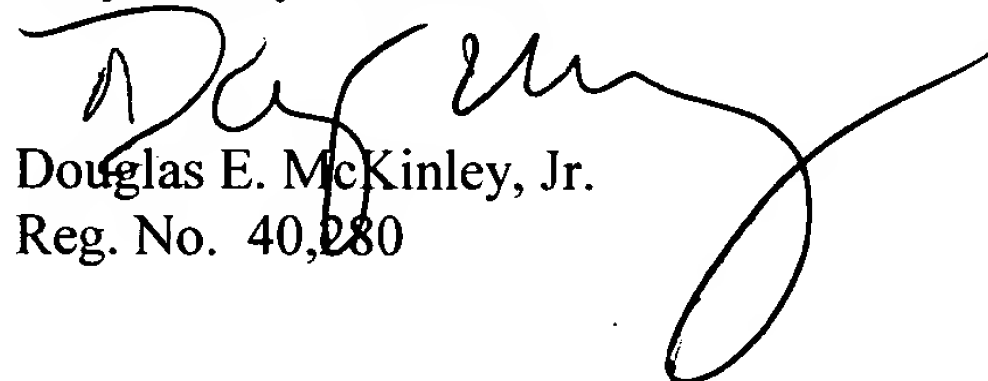


Appl. No. 09/177,902  
Amdt. dated September 16, 2004  
Reply to Office action of June 16, 2004

### Remarks/Arguments

In his rejection of claims 1-17 dated June 16, 2004, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-17 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner's objection rests on the grounds that the independent claims have not, in the Examiner's mind, specified that the rod be in the first position at the time the packed column is produced. The Examiner has averred that the claims would be allowed, if rewritten to provide specificity with respect to this point, as the Examiner has agreed that the present invention produces unexpectedly superior results when compared to the prior art system disclosed in the applicant's specification, and the Examiner has therefore removed the Examiner's prior rejection for obviousness. Accordingly, the applicant has amended claims 1, 5, 8, and 17, and all remaining claims by virtue of dependency, to recite that the rod is in the first position when the packed column is formed. Applicant has made an earnest attempt to place the above referenced application in condition for allowance and action toward that end is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any further observations or comments, he is invited to contact the undersigned for resolution.

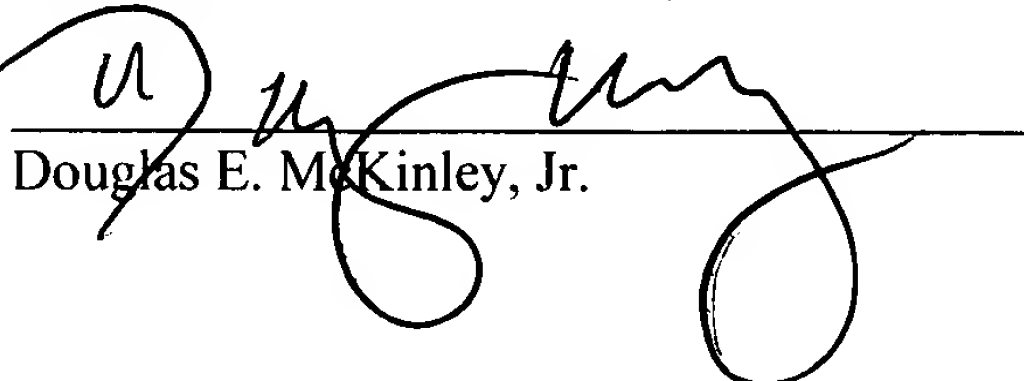
Respectfully submitted,



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The undersigned hereby certifies that the forgoing Amendment dated September 16, 2004 in reply to the office action of June 16, 2004, together with a return postcard are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Mail Stop Non Fee Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on the date set forth below.



Douglas E. McKinley, Jr.

September 16, 2004  
Date